

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Thornton Adobe Barn  
Other name/site number 007-0000-0027

### 2. Location

Street & number 1 mile East and 1 1/4 miles North of Isabel ☐ not for publication  
City or town Isabel ☒ vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Pratt Code 151 Zip code 67065

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination  
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Geelard S. Lukens, Deputy SHPO 10/22/03

Signature of certifying official/Title  
Kansas State Historical Society

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional  
Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- ☐ entered in the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined eligible for the National \_\_\_\_\_  
Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined not eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_  
National Register  
☐ removed from the National \_\_\_\_\_  
Register  
☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Thornton Adobe Barn  
Name of property

Pratt County, Kansas  
County and State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private  
☐ public-local  
☒ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

#### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: gambrel-roofed adobe barn

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls ADOBE

Walls Brick with limestone trim

METAL: tin

roof METAL: tin

other

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)



Name of Property Thornton Adobe Barn

County and State Pratt County, Kansas

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

#### ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1942

### Significant Dates

1942

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

James Edward Thornton

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ Previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property Thornton Adobe Barn

County and State Pratt County, Kansas

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	4	5	4	0	9	2	0	4	1	4	8	9	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing										
2															
3															
4															

☐ See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/title Melissa Fisher Isaacs, National Register Intern

Organization Kansas State Historical Society Date June 18, 2003

Street & number 6425 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Telephone 785-272-8681

City or town Topeka State Kansas Zip code 66615-1099

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

name Kansas Department of Parks and Wildlife

street & number 512 SE 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue telephone 620-672-5911

city or town Pratt state Kansas zip code 67124

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16) U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503



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**Thornton Adobe Barn**  
**Pratt County, Kansas**

**Description**

The Thornton Adobe Barn is an adobe dairy barn with a corrugated metal-clad gambrel roof. The barn was built by James Edward (Ed) Thornton and other members of the Isabel, Kansas, rural community. In response to the materials shortages of World War II, the walls of the lower story are constructed of adobe bricks covered on both the interior and the exterior with white stucco; the exterior walls of the hayloft are reused corrugated metal. A recent restoration effort has preserved the barn's unique adobe walls and rendered the barn weather-tight once again.

The rectangular footprint of the barn measures 40 feet by 24 feet, and is situated with the lengthwise axis running east to west. The south elevation of the barn features, from west to east, a four pane window, a four foot wide walk-in doorway with a gate constructed of wooden slats, a second four pane window, and an eight foot wide sliding door covered with corrugated metal. All of the barn's windows are set into pre-cast cement frames, and measure 24 inches by 16 inches. Between the walk-in doorway and the second window, a section of the adobe has been left unstuccoed and is framed and protected by glass.

The north elevation has one four pane window near the center of the facade and a four foot wide board-and-batten door near the west end of the facade. On the west elevation, two four pane windows penetrate the adobe wall, and centered above them, a four foot by four foot corrugated metal door provides access to the loft level. The east elevation is accessed at the ground level by a four foot walk-in doorway near the facade's north end and at the hayloft level by a four foot by four foot corrugated metal door near the facade's south end.

The interior of the ground level is dominated by three rows of five stanchions for dairy cattle; the ground level also features a four foot by seven foot grain bin. The pre-cast window casing on the west-facing wall is inscribed "Aug. 1942," while the casing in the north-facing wall is inscribed with the names of both Ed Thornton and Fred Westphal, a teenager who assisted Ed Thornton in the construction of the barn. The hayloft, accessed from the interior of the barn via a wooden staircase in the southwest corner, is open.

By 1999, some of the barn's protective stucco coat had fallen off, leaving adobe bricks exposed and vulnerable. A group of concerned local citizens donated time and money to replace damaged bricks

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with those from another, more severely deteriorated, local adobe barn that had also been built by Ed Thornton. No new adobe bricks were created for the restoration. All of the barn's original masonry covering was removed and replaced. The windows were also replaced. This restoration, completed in 2001, leaves the barn in excellent repair.



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**Statement of Significance**

The Thornton Adobe Barn (c. 1942) is historically significant under Criterion C as a rare and excellently preserved example of adobe architecture in Kansas. The barn was built of adobe as a result of the shortages experienced by Americans during World War II. The use of this locally unusual building technique exemplifies the resourcefulness of those who remained on the home front. It illustrates the ingenuity required of rural Kansans who were recovering from the Depression and making do despite the domestic privations of wartime.

In January 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt created the War Production Board (WPB), which was responsible for directing the nation's industrial resources during World War II. The WPB immediately began to issue orders that prohibited the production of many appliances and other nonessential goods, and that persuaded companies to retool their factories for the manufacture of munitions. In February 1942, the WPB issued Order L-41, also known as the building conservation order, which limited farm construction to \$1000 or less. This restriction, paired with the shortages of materials that had been redirected to the war effort, obliged farmers to investigate the use of native materials in constructing agricultural buildings.

In the early 1940s, Kansas farmers were also encouraged to consider adding or expanding dairy operations on their farms. For instance, the federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) advertised a loan plan for dairy cattle. The RFC was a government agency created to stimulate economic activity during the Depression by implementing loan programs. The effects of the economic depression and devastating drought of the 1930s still lingered, and one of these effects was the depletion of dairy stock on Midwestern farms.

These two circumstances encouraged James Edward (Ed) Thornton to construct an adobe barn to house dairy cattle in 1942. With lumber, steel, and money in short supply, Ed Thornton turned to native building materials. Adobe is one of the oldest building materials known to humankind. For centuries, adobe bricks have been made of a mixture of earth and water and often straw or grass, which helps the bricks to shrink evenly as they dry. Poured into a wooden form, this mixture is allowed to bake in the sun.

According to Fred Westphal, who helped Ed Thornton construct his barn, "We would go to the low part of a pasture where water would stand sometimes, [Mr. Thornton] would plow up a portion of the grass and ground...and we would incorporate a little straw into it and he would disc this together and we would haul water and put it on all this and then put it into a bunch of forms he had made. Then, after blocks cured...the process would start again."<sup>1</sup> This process resulted in adobe bricks that

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<sup>1</sup> Westphal, Fred. Letter to Della Thornton Thompson. 9 June 1999. Excerpted in draft nomination.

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were six inches tall, eight inches wide, and 18 inches long. These bricks were laid in header courses, on a footing of cement blocks, to a height of seven feet.

The raising of Ed Thornton's barn, as is famously traditional in barn construction, was a community affair. Several of his neighbors pitched in their time and energy to assist Mr. Thornton in building his barn. Adobe became a locally popular building material during this time. A few of these neighbors also had adobe structures built on their farms. Bruce Hiskett's adobe chicken house is no longer extant; two walls of Harvey Dalbow's barn have been replaced by pole barn construction. The reminiscences of local people indicate that other area farmers also had barns built of adobe. Ed Thornton's farmstead alone eventually included a round adobe brooder house and an adobe shop building, neither of which are still in existence.

The barn now stands on lands owned by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks known as the Isabel Wetlands. The barn is currently open to the public. Inside, visitors will find a display of photographs and newspaper articles detailing the restoration process and the barn's history.

**Bibliography**

"Farmers Can Build Wheat Storage Bins," *Isabel County-Liner*, 15 May 1942.

"Group Works to Preserve Barn," *Pratt Tribune*, 31 August 2000.

Hiskett, Vernon. Letter to Della Thornton Thompson. Excerpted in draft nomination.

"Plan to Finance Good Dairy Cows," *Isabel County-Liner*, 23 February 1940, p. 1.

Stedman, Myrtle and Wilfred. *Adobe Architecture*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: The Sunstone Press, 1973.

"Straw Will Do," *Isabel County-Liner*, 27 February 1942, p. 1.

Thornton, John. Letter to Della Thornton Thompson. Excerpted in draft nomination.

"Use Native Material for Farm Structures," *Isabel County-Liner*, 23 October 1942, p. 4.

Westphal, Fred. Letter to Della Thornton Thompson. 9 June 1999. Excerpted in draft nomination.



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**Verbal Boundary Description**

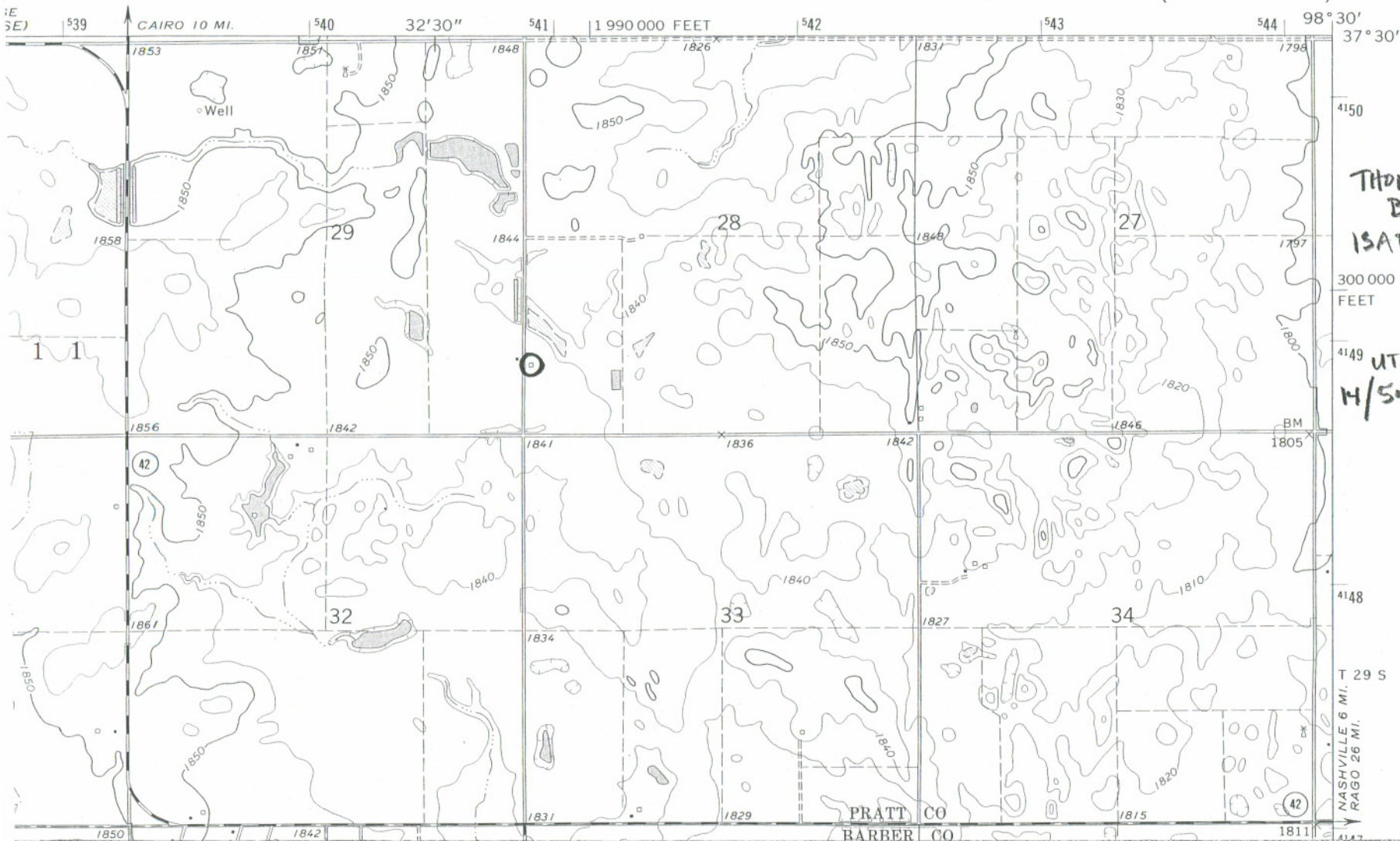
The nominated property is located on the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 28, in the vicinity of Isabel, Pratt County, Kansas, on a one acre tract of land. The acreage is bounded on the west by a county road and to the north, east and south by the original farmland.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property stands on a portion of the land historically associated with the James Edward Thornton farmstead.

ISABEL QUADRANGLE  
KANSAS  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

6359 III SW  
(ST. LEO)



THORNTON ADOBE  
BARN  
ISABEL VICINITY,  
300 000 PRATT COUNTY,  
FEET KANSAS

UTM REFERENCES:  
H/540920/4148900

T 29 S  
NASHVILLE 6 MI.  
RAGO 26 MI.